

ahca

American Health Care Association

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July 23, 2004

The Honorable John B. Larson
U.S. House of Representatives
1005 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515-0701

Dear Congressman Larson:

On behalf of the American Health Care Association, whose members are entrusted with the safety and care of nearly one million nursing home residents, I am writing to express our support for H.R. 4967, the "Nursing Home Fire Safety Act of 2004", legislation you recently introduced to require the installation of automatic fire sprinklers in all nursing homes and to provide the federal financial support that is needed so this critical safety goal can be accomplished.

While the fire safety record of nursing homes has been very good in recent years, two tragic fires in 2003 occurred and claimed 31 lives. The first, in your home district, claimed 16 lives. The fire in Nashville, Tennessee claimed 15 lives. While these facilities were not required to be equipped with automatic fire sprinklers, National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) records clearly indicate that automatic sprinkler systems dramatically improve the chances of survival of those who cannot save themselves in a nursing home fire; specifically bed ridden or cognitively impaired seniors, children and people with disabilities. There has never been a multi-death fire in a nursing home that was fully equipped with automatic fire sprinklers.

For this reason, AHCA is advocating for the full sprinklering of all nursing facilities nationwide. Your legislation provides the requirement and means to achieve it. Additionally, AHCA has recommended to the NFPA that full sprinklering be a requirement of its 2006 edition of the Life Safety Code. Today, estimates are that about 25 percent of all nursing facilities are not fully sprinklered and that the cost of completing this work will be about \$1 billion.

Congressman Larson, AHCA supports and commends you for the leadership you are providing with the introduction of the "Nursing Home Fire Safety Act of 2004." We will be working to help build co-sponsorship support for your legislation.

Sincerely,


Bruce V. Byarwood
Legislative Counsel

cc: Tomi Fatone

THE AMERICAN HEALTH CARE ASSOCIATION (AHCA) IS COMMITTED TO QUALITY AND PERFORMANCE EXCELLENCE IN THE LONG TERM CARE PROFESSION AND ACTIVELY SUPPORTS QUALITY FIRST, A COVENANT FOR HEALTHY, AFFORDABLE, AND ETHICAL LONG TERM CARE, AND ADHERENCE TO ITS PRINCIPLES AND GOALS. NATIONWIDE, AHCA REPRESENTS MORE THAN 10,000 NON-PROFIT AND FOR-PROFIT FACILITIES THAT ARE DEDICATED TO PROFESSIONAL AND COMPASSIONATE CARE FOR MORE THAN ONE MILLION ELDERLY AND DISABLED INDIVIDUALS IN NURSING FACILITIES, ASSISTED LIVING RESIDENCES, SUBACUTE CENTERS AND HOMES OF PERSONS WITH MENTAL RETARDATION AND DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES.